



Testimony on House Bill 99
Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee

Submitted by:
Rev. Dr. Mary Laymon

Chair Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony **in opposition to to HB 99**.

As the Director of Tikkun Farm, a community based non-profit, I welcome students from Mt. Healthy City Schools to my farm on a regular basis. Given the high number of Adverse Childhood Experiences (at least three, on average, some students have as many at 4-6) in their young lives, school is often a place with a great deal of reactivity, where small triggering moments escalate quickly into violence. School fights, unfortunately, are common for this reason. Students in our After School program often showed up very anxious, in a state of fight or flight, after leaving school.

This kind of environment is the last place we need more guns.

- The National Association of School Resource Officers strongly opposes proposals to arm teachers due to the risk it would pose to law enforcement, **students** and the school community, as well as the risks to the armed teachers themselves. (National Association of School Resource Officers. NASRO opposes arming teachers. . <https://www.campussafetymagazine.com/safety/nasro-opposes-arming-teachers/> February 23, 2018). Lieutenant John Weinstein, the commander of Northern Virginia Community College Public Safety District 3, agrees with NASRO's stance. "In 2015, Weinstein was asked by a friend to **observe a church security team** going through their active shooter response drills. All members of the team were CCP holders and the majority were military combat veterans who trained regularly at shooting ranges.

During various scenarios, innocent civilians and responding officers were shot. Weinstein witnessed team members crossing in front of other members' aimed weapons.

"Upon observing the team's performance in these straightforward scenarios, my opinion changed on the desirability of an institution endorsing armed CCP holders in classes to deter and, if deterrence fails, respond to an active shooter on campus," said Weinstein. "Ultimately, I came to the conclusion that the possession of a CCP and even firearms training received by many in the military do not ensure the ability to appropriately use firearms to protect life and limb in a college setting."

- The President and Executive Director of the Major Cities Chiefs Association, which represents 75 police forces from large cities in the USA and Canada, both agree that arming teachers is "*not a good idea.*" (Toppo G. 132 hours to train teachers on guns: is it enough? *USA Today*. March 8, 2018.) "The more guns that are coming into the equation, the more volatility and the more risk there is of somebody getting hurt." (*J. Thomas Manger, president of the Major Cities Chiefs Association*)
- The American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association are the nation's two largest teachers' organizations representing millions of educators and staff. They oppose arming teachers. (Everytown for

Gun Safety. Keeping our kids safe at school: a plan to stop mass shootings and end gun violence in American schools. everytownresearch.org/schoolsafety. February 2019.

The notion of a highly trained teacher armed with a gun is a myth.

Law enforcement officers receive an average of **840** hours of basic training including 168 hours of training on weapons, self-defense, and the use of force. (Reaves BA. State and local law enforcement training academies, 2013. US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. July 2016. <https://bit.ly/2pg0whI>.) **HB99 only requires 22 hours training for school staff.**

Even some of the most highly trained law enforcement officers in the country, those of the New York City Police Department, see their ability to shoot accurately decrease significantly when engaged in gunfights with perpetrators.

Students will access teachers' guns.

Research strongly supports the idea that children will access guns when guns are present.

- One study showed that the majority of children are aware of where their parents store their guns. In fact, more than one third of those children reported handling their parents' guns, many doing so without the knowledge of their parents. Nearly a quarter of parents did not know that their children had handled the gun in their house.
- There have been numerous incidents where guns carried into schools were misplaced — guns left in bathrooms, locker rooms, sporting events, even an incident where a gun fell out while a teacher did a backflip.
- There are also multiple incidents where guns were stolen from teachers by students, or cases where guns were misplaced and later found in the hands of students.

The risk of shootings increases.

Access to a firearm, irrespective of age, **triples the risk of death by suicide** and **doubles the risk of death by homicide**. There have been several incidents of guns intentionally or unintentionally discharged on school grounds by school staff. This includes both intentional and unintentional shootings.

The students in my community will not be safer if HB99 is passed. Rather this bill puts them at even greater risks of violence at school.

The evidence about the dangers of arming teachers in schools is very clear. If HB99 is passed, it will not be for the safety of students or the community. It will be for the profit of gun manufacturers who use tragedies like school shootings to increase fear and offer false solutions that profit them at the cost of those they falsely claim to be protecting.

There were “good guys with guns” at Uvadale. Trained “good guys with guns”. And despite their hundreds more hours of training than HB99 requires, they did not prevent the deaths of 19 children and two teachers.

As a pastor and community leader, I stand against any solution that brings more weapons into environments where we want more peace. I ask all members of the committee to vote against HB99.

Respectfully submitted,
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